

## On the equatorial populations of *Halcyon albiventris* (Scopoli)

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The Afrotropical Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris* (Scopoli) is one of the commoner non-piscivorous savanna-haunting kingfishers occurring to the east and south of the Lower Guinea Forest, some 5 subspecies being currently recognised. While most of the subspecies are in the main largely sedentary, 2 of the southern forms have been established as being migratory to a certain extent.

Variation of subspecific import in the present species affects general size, levels of colour saturation and the nature of the ventral surface, which may be either plain or streaked with dark brown in association with geography. During the course of work on the compilation of his important *Check-list of Angolan Birds* of 1963, Traylor (1960) was counselled by Mrs B. P. Hall, at the time associated with the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) (BMNH), and by the present author to place the Angolan population with the subspecies *H.a. prentissgrayi* Bowen, 1929: forest above Meru, Mt Kenya, Kenya, rather than with the eastern littoral form *H.a. orientalis* Peters, 1868: Inhambane, southern Mozambique, which arrangement was favoured up to that time. This resulted in *H.a. prentissgrayi* being considered as ranging from the interior of Kenya and Tanzania and Malaŵi, west north of the Zambesi R. to eastern and southern Zaïre, Zambia, Angola, the Republic of Congo, Cabinda (Angola) and Gabon. In his recent work on Angolan birds, Rosa Pinto (1983) follows Traylor in treating the local population as *H.a. prentissgrayi*.

A study of the material available in the BMNH and the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, in the autumn of 1985 shows that *prentissgrayi* is a composite taxon, confirming Traylor's 1960 comment that "It is tempting to divide *prentissgrayi* into three races", though in the end he finally decided to recognise a single heterogeneous subspecies (*prentissgrayi*). I believe the problem presented by the heterogeneity of the said subspecies can be resolved by splitting it into western and eastern blocks of populations, restricting *H.a. prentissgrayi* to the high interior of Kenya (north to Mt Kenya), south through the Tanzanian hinterland to Malaŵi and the high west of northern Mozambique. The populations occurring to the west of this in the equatorial belt of the continent are substantially more saturated and warm brownish, less earthen coloured, than in the case of females of the Kenyan form, while the males exhibit a rusty overlay to the hind crown and nape not present in the latter. It seems desirable to recognise these established characteristics of the western elements by proposing

### *Halcyon albiventris* *hylophila* subsp. nov.

*Type.* ♂, adult. 25 km N (and 15 km E) of Duque de Bragança, Malanje, Angola. 26 May 1954. Collected by Gerd Heinrich. In the collection of the Durban Natural History Museum, D.M. Reg. No 14146. (*Ex coll.* Chicago Nat. Hist. Mus., U.S.A. (Reg. No 22069)).

*Description.* Differs from *H.a. prentissgrayi*, described from Kenya, in the male having the entire pileum darker, the feathers of the hind crown and nape markedly fringed with rust-colour, imparting a reddish wash. Also with the

light hind-neck bar more tinged with rust-colour. In worn dress, the head-top is strikingly darker.

Female more sharply differentiated than the male, having the pileum, mantle and scapulars a more saturated and redder brown, the mantle warm Olive-Brown (Ridgway 1912), *versus* cold Mummy Brown in *prentissgrayi*. Similar in size.

*Measurements (mm)*. Wings (flattened) of 12 ♂♂ from Zaïre 103–110 (105.7), SD 2.25; wings of 12 ♀♀ 101–108 (104.4), SD 2.16.

*Material examined*. 50. *Cabinda (Angola)* 1: Landana; *Angola* 6: Dalatando (Ndala Tando); near Duque de Bragança; 30 km S of Gabela; Luhanda; Leba (15° 05' S, 13° 15' E); near Luacano (11° 15' S, 21° 40' E); *Zaïre* 38: Kinshasa (Leopoldville); Kambove; Lubumbashi (Elizabethville); Lukafu, Shaba (10° 31' S, 27° 33' E); Bunkeya, Shaba (10° 24' S, 26° 58' E); Kipopo (? Shaba); Kasaji, Shaba (10° 23' S, 23° 28' E); Baudouinville, L. Tanganika; etc. *Zambia* 6: Mwinilunga; Nasanga; Mpika district. Also examined, 25 *H.a. prentissgrayi* and c. 60 *H.a. orientalis*.

*Range*. Southern Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Angola on the plateau, southern Zaïre (east and south of the Lower Guinea Forest, east to Shaba and Kivu), and western and northern Zambia. Intergrades to the east of the range as given with *prentissgrayi*, as shown by material from Baudouinville on L. Tanganika, Zaïre.

*Measurements (mm) of the Type*: Wing 101, culmen from base 46.5, tarsus 15.5, tail 60.

*Etymology*. *Hylophila*, Greek, favouring or affecting woods.

*Remarks*. It is of import to note that Bowen (1929) based his *H.a. prentissgrayi* on a single ♂ specimen. East of the range of this subspecies as now established, *H.a. orientalis* is distributed along the eastern African lowlands from Mozambique to the north of the lower Limpopo R. to the coast of Kenya, extending some way into the interior in the valley of the Zambesi R. To the north of this it is replaced by *H.a. erlangeri* Neumann, 1908: Bardera, southwestern Somalia, which is similar in colouration to *orientalis* but is smaller. Material of this localised taxon was not available to me, but Bowen gives its wings as 92–97 mm in both sexes.

The 2 southern African forms: *H.a. albiventris* (Scopoli), 1786: Cape Province, and *H.a. vociferans* Clancey, 1952: Ingwavuma R., northeastern Zululand, are larger than the more northerly races and have the ventral surfaces heavily streaked with brown, the former the more heavily streaked of the two.

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